



Opera Parallèle presents

HARRIET'S SPIRIT

Music by Marcus Shelby

Libretto by Roma Olvera

January 18 & 20th, 2018

Buriel Clay Theater

African American Art & Culture Complex

762 Fulton Street, San Francisco

Conducted by Luçik Aprahämian
Directed by Erin Neff



OPERAPARALLELE.ORG



Opera Parallèle presents

Harriet's Spirit

A New Children's Opera | Inspired by the life of Harriet Tubman

MUSIC BY MARCUS SHELBY • LIBRETTO BY ROMA OLVERA
DIRECTED BY ERIN NEFF • CONDUCTED BY LUÇIK APRAHĀMIAN

CAST

HARRIET: Tiffany Austin, Jazz Vocalist

MODESTY: Christabel Nunoo, Soprano

GENERAL MONTGOMERY: Torlef Borsting, Baritone

BEN: Derek Duncan

BULLY CHORUS I: Na'Diamond Frayer, Skyler Holmgren-Lee, Aniyah Lewis,
Lila Shamsi, Shuri Smith, Esther Zeng

BULLY CHORUS II: Jude Bennett, Caleb Blumenfeld, Jade Luk, Zoe Manerud

SAY NOTHING CHORUS: Melia Blumenfeld, Vivian Riehle, Poppy Marsh,
Leigh Wolberger, Stella Vale

EVACUEES: Melia Blumenfeld, Derek Duncan, Jude Bennett, Na'Diamond Frayer, Zoe
Manerud, Poppy Marsh, Vivian Riehle, Esther Zeng

CHORUS CONTINUO: Alice Del Simone, Nina Dessart, Carolyn Hui

PIANO: Keisuke Nakagoshi

*Production sponsored by Denise Young Smith, Sam Mazza Foundation,
and Bill Graham Memorial Foundation*

WELCOME TO HARRIET'S SPIRIT

The themes of bullying, strength of voice, powerful models, compassion, and the impact of inclusion are themes that stand just individually, stand strongly on their own. In *Harriet's Spirit*, these themes are all intertwined over Marcus Shelby's powerful and beautifully melodic score, and Roma Olvera's globally relatable libretto. It is opera, it is jazz, it is the richness of gospel and the truth of the human spirit...voiced through one of the most powerful historical figures in American history. It is each of us, yet heard through the voices of our children.

When I first heard of the project last year it resonated for me as representative of everything important to me, everything I stand and have stood for in life as a woman of color and an advocate of making way for all voices to be heard and represented. Layer on the importance of these conversations in this moment in time... and with my professional background, *Harriet's Spirit* took on a level of personal importance. Serving the production both creatively and as sole sponsor has been a great joy and will continue to allow me to engage as this important work evolves.

To become truly inclusive in this world we must all understand the transformative power of role modeling, and how we all are involved in that process. I urge everyone to find that one project or creative work in progress somewhere...in a school, an arts organization, or simply a creative idea, and lend your whole self, right and left brain, to its manifestation. These are the additional ways we can serve the arts: art which informs vision, which then transforms.

As I did, I hope each of us can find our Harriet's Spirit ... and "use all our strength"!



Denise Young Smith

Creative Contributor, Production Sponsor

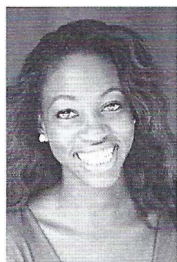
SYNOPSIS

Modesty is a middle school aged girl who is struggling with bullying. She tries daily to "say nothing" and melt into the scenery so classmates won't make fun of her. Even worse though, she is too afraid to protect her friends enduring the same abuse. In quiet moments, she escapes her fear by learning about the life of Harriet Tubman. In times of struggle, she is visited by the commanding historical figure who comforts her, offers advice, tells stories that connect to her life today, and ultimately shows how she triumphed during a moment in the Civil War of great peril with the power of love and music. With the guidance of Harriet, Modesty hopes to do the same.

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES



Tiffany Austin, Jazz Vocalist (HARRIET) is one of the West Coast's fastest rising jazz vocalists. She is a classically trained singer who delivers a fiery blend of blues and classic swing. A graduate of UC Berkeley's Boalt School of Law who has lived and performed on three continents, Austin decided to forgo a career as a lawyer to focus on music, her true passion. Her 2015 debut album *Nothing But Soul* earned positive reviews, including four stars from *Downbeat Magazine* and an NPR *Fresh Air* radio feature. Austin is currently working on her second album, *Unbroken*, scheduled for release in early 2018.



Christabel Nunoo, Soprano (MODESTY) recently obtained her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, & Dance. A former member of the Young Musicians Choral Orchestra, Nunoo has been invited to perform on several occasions with renowned Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano, Frederica von Stade, and was featured in a concert with American composer Jake Heggie for San Francisco Performances. She made her solo debut in 2012 with the Oakland Symphony under the direction of Michael Morgan at the Target Independence Day Celebration. She appeared with the Oakland Symphony again in June 2013 in *A Celebration of the Music of Dave Brubeck* performing alongside Frederica von Stade and Dave's son Chris Brubeck. Nunoo owes her passion and dedication for the arts to her mother who always pushed her to work hard and find her niche in life.



Torlef Borsting, Baritone (GENERAL MONTGOMERY) has been a career soloist and chorister in the Bay Area for 12 years. He has performed several roles on the mainstage at San Francisco Opera, served as a resident artist at Opera San Jose, as well as played leading roles with every other company around the Bay. From *Scarpia* to the Brahms *Requiem*, Borsting has shown a wide range of style and character and is often drawn to explore new pieces and composers.



Keisuke Nakagoshi, Resident Pianist is a native of Japan and studied composition with David Conte and piano with Paul Hersh. In 2005 he was selected to represent the San Francisco Conservatory of Music for the Kennedy Center's Conservatory Project. Nakagoshi has performed to acclaim on many prestigious concert stages across the United States including his recent solo debut with San Francisco Symphony on Ingvar Lidholm's *Poesis* with Herbert Blomstedt conducting. He has received training from some of the most celebrated musicians of our time—Emanuel Ax, Gilbert Kalish, and Menahem Pressler. Nakagoshi is Pianist-in-Residence at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, as well as a member of the Grammy-nominated piano duet ZOFO.

ARTISTIC TEAM BIOGRAPHIES



Luçik Aprahämian, Conductor: is the Music Director of the vocal group, Resound Ensemble, and is a guest conductor for Opera Parallèle. She is also on the faculty of the San Francisco Girls Chorus, Music at Kohl Mansion's education program, and First Lutheran Church of Palo Alto. An avid proponent of new music, Aprahämian has commissioned and premiered a variety of works, most recently *To Those Born Later* by Anne Hege. She was assistant conductor for OP's recent production of *The Little Prince*. She will be the music director for Mendocino Music Festival's *Il Matrimonio Segreto*. She completed undergraduate studies in fortepiano performance and graduate studies in conducting from the University of California at Santa Cruz. She also received her doctorate in choral and orchestral conducting from the University of Arizona.



Erin Neff, Director: first appeared with Opera Parallèle singing the role of Margret in *Wozzeck* and later appeared in *The Great Gatsby*. In 2016 she assisted director Brian Staufenbiel on the opera *Champion*, a job she will reprise for February's *One Story Two Operas* at SFJAZZ. Additionally she has directed for the San Francisco Opera Center, Mendocino Music Festival, Island City Opera, and the Telluride Music Festival. She was on staff at UCSF from 1993-2003, teaching voice and currently maintains a private voice studio. An active singer, she has worked at the SF Opera Chorus since 1996. Most recently she was heard there as The Confidante in *Elektra*.



Rachael Heiman, Production Designer: returns to the Opera Parallèle team working as a production designer and fabricator after designing *Xochitl* and *the Flowers* in 2016. She has been working in the Bay Area as an actor as well as a costume, prop, and set builder for around 6 years. Heiman has also worked for African American Shakespeare, SF Playhouse, West Bay Opera, Marin Shakespeare, Silicon Valley Shakespeare, San Jose Stage, and the San Francisco Speakeasy. She is currently in her third year at the California College of the Arts mixing Industrial Design, Sculpture, and Fashion Design into one individualized major.



Lucy Coarsey, Stage Manager: is originally from North Carolina, and earned a B.A. in Music from Florida State University in 2015. After graduating, Coarsey began work as a freelance stage manager for opera companies including Opera Parallèle, Shreveport Opera, Opera Orlando, Piedmont Opera, North Carolina Opera, and the Merola Opera Program. She thanks her family and friends on the East Coast and San Francisco for all of their love and support.

CREATOR'S BIOGRAPHIES



Marcus Shelby, Composer: is a bandleader, composer, arranger, bassist, educator, and activist who currently lives in San Francisco, California. Over the past 25 years he has built a diverse biography as a composer. His work and music have focused on sharing the history, present, and future of African American lives, on social movements in the United States of America, and on early childhood music education. His work includes *Beyond the Blues: A Prison Oratorio*, an original composition for big band orchestra about the Prison Industrial Complex, *Soul of the Movement*—a musical suite on MLK and the Civil Rights Movement, and *Harriet Tubman*—a musical suite based on the life of freedom fighter, Harriet Tubman. Shelby also works with the Equal Justice Society and is currently commissioned to create a musical theater work about the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He teaches at The Community Music Center, Old Adobe Elementary School, St. Paul's Middle School, and the Stanford Jazz Workshop, and has led many of the SFJAZZ Family Matinee Concerts, often with children's book author Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket). San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee recently appointed Shelby to the San Francisco Arts Commission where he serves on the Community Arts Grants and Education Committee and the Street Artists Committee.



Roma Olvera, Librettist: is the Educational Programs Director for Opera Parallèle. She leads the three-tiered education program that commissions new works for children, develops original curriculum for engaging local high school students in main stage contemporary opera productions, and hosts students of all ages in the Bay Area for final dress rehearsals throughout the season. Olvera specializes in curriculum development that integrates music into every subject of standardized elementary and high school education. She has taught music for several school districts in California, as well as developed music programs for underserved communities in Brooklyn and the Bronx in New York City. She has worked with Midori and Friends on a pilot music outreach program and Hofstra University on a teacher development through music program. *Harriet's Spirit* is her third libretto. She also wrote *Xochitl and the Flowers* (2016) and *Amazing Grace* (2015). A lyric soprano, Olvera holds a Bachelor of Music from UC Santa Cruz in Vocal Performance and a Masters of Music Education from Teachers College, Columbia University.



ABOUT HANDS ON OPERA

Every year the Hands-on Opera Program identifies a story that will resonate with youth and translate into the magic of opera. This year, Opera Parallèle presents an original narrative inspired by the life of Harriet Tubman. We once again partner with the African American Art & Culture Complex in the continued efforts to engage a diverse audience with relevant material focused on empowering youth through the complete operatic experience. We treat our young performers as collaborators and develop works that are both accessible and sophisticated.

ROOFTOP ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Rooftop Alternative Pre K-8 School is located in Twin Peaks, at the geographic center of San Francisco. Rooftop's school vision states that "when the arts are thoughtfully integrated into the academic program, students' opportunities to think critically and problem solve creatively significantly increase." For over a decade, composer Marcus Shelby has worked with the Rooftop community to make beautiful music. From Shelby's 2007 musical oratorio *Harriet Tubman* to *Harriet's Spirit*, Marcus has taught Rooftop that music can encourage young people to explore, express, and record their own stories. Like the family story quilts that serve as the opera's backdrop, *Harriet's Spirit* is a celebration of creativity, filled with love for friends and family.

The *Harriet's Spirit* quilts are based on story art created by Rooftop families who attended the Family Art Night event and Ms. Kelly Louis' second graders. Textile design by Jade, Brenda, Lillie and Vivian. Adinkra stamps by Ms. Karina Hall's eighth grade art class.

ARTISTIC/PRODUCTION TEAM

Artistic Director: Nicole Paiement

Creative Director: Brian Staufenbiel

Educational Programs Director: Roma Olvera

Director: Erin Neff

Conductor: Luçik Aprāhamian

Costume/Stage Design: Rachael Heiman

Stage Manager: Lucy Coarsey

Lighting Technician: Kevin Myrick, Synergy Moon

Quilters: Mary Ann Cruz, Judy Toupin, Laura Jean Ruppert, Katy Juranty, Erika Holmgren, and Andi Wong

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Limitless thanks to OP’s artistic leaders, Nicole and Brian, for guiding and believing in this special program. Their expertise and creativity are a constant inspiration. This production was supported in so many ways by Denise Young Smith. We are profoundly grateful for her dedication to telling important stories with great care and artistry. Thank you for giving the project your whole self. Very special thanks to the many people and organizations that made this production possible. Teachers, principals, supporting staff, and the parents of Rooftop K-8 community, and the wonderful community at African American Art & Culture Complex. Our Explorer in Residence Andi Wong has been a true role model through this creative process. She is an invaluable champion of children and their artistic selves. Thank you so much. Thank you to the OP Board of Directors for their support for the future of contemporary opera. Very special thanks to Taylor Chan, Steve DiBartolomeo, Jaisette Herrera, and Scott Horton.

BENEFACTORS

Opera Parallèle Education Programs are generously funded by Denise Young Smith, the Sam Mazza Foundation, the Bill Graham Memorial Foundation, Jerome C. Roth, and other individual donations. We are deeply grateful for their commitment to providing young people with meaningful connections to the arts. If you would like to know more about our educational outreach programs, please contact our Educational Programs Director Roma Olvera: roma@operaparallele.org, (415) 626-6279.

ARTIST SPONSORS

Special thanks to the generosity of our Artist Sponsors Nicole Paiement (Holly & Tom Mayer, Martha Rochelle, Robert Ripps & Steven Spector); Brian Staufenberg (Bernice Lindstrom, D.G. Mitchell, Jack & Betty Schafer, Katherine Slazak); Roma Olvera (Bernice Lindstrom); Jacques Desjardins (Alice Morison, Susan Schumann, Katherine Slazak); Jack Beuttler (Susan McConkey).

OPERA PARALLÈLE ARTISTIC SUPPORT AND STAFF

- Nicole Paiement:** Artistic Director, Founder
- Debbie Chinn:** Executive Director
- Brian Staufenberg:** Creative Director
- Jacques Desjardins:** Artistic Administrator
- Roma Olvera:** Educational Programs Director, Office Manager
- Marilyn Langbehn:** Development and Marketing Coordinator
- Laura Anderson:** Artistic Manager
- Daniel Harvey:** Assistant to the Artistic Director
- Jack Beuttler:** Production Manager
- Jessalyn Johnson:** Project Coordinator
- Scott Horton:** Media Relations
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